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Light...

SEP 1 1984



.....ON A NEW WORLD



*Published for the Bexley Christadelphian Ecclesia
by 'The Dawn' Book Supply, 17 Leegate,
London, SE12 8SS, England*

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VOLUME EIGHT

NUMBER 6

JULY/AUGUST 1984

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Resurrection

EVERYWHERE, IN EVERY land, on every sea, death roams, an unwelcome but inevitable intruder, the curse of all life in its varied forms on this planet.

How will you face death when it visits you or your family? Will the grim fact of its finality and your total helplessness to stay its irresistible hand leave you without hope for the future? Or will you comfort yourself with the thought that some mysterious part of the human frame is enjoying heavenly bliss?

Have you always simply accepted whatever you may have heard about heaven—going or have you ever stopped to try to prove it? Have you ever tried to find whether it is promised in your Bible? If you ever do, you are in for a surprise. Nowhere will you find the phrase ‘immortal soul’ in your Bible. Instead, it teaches that death is real, that it is the end of you and me and those we love—unless, (and the purpose of this article is to demonstrate this vital matter to you)—unless we have a hope of resurrection from the dead.

In outline the Bible’s teaching is absolutely simple and straightforward. It tells how God gave man life, telling him he would be punished with death if disobedient. Man was disobedient, so he *was* punished with death. However, God did grant an opportunity for forgiveness and hope of a life to come through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus was the first man God raised from the dead to eternal life. He is now with His Father waiting for the set time to return to earth and rule over it. All who have come to know God and His purpose will be raised and those who have lived in obedience to Him will be given eternal life.

So much for the summary, now for more detail.

THERE IS NOTHING INHERENT IN MAN THAT LIVES ON AFTER DEATH

Nowhere does the Bible teach that man lives on in any way after death. Although

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this is not our subject, it must be the starting point of it, and so we are putting before you some Bible references which explain in no uncertain terms the death state.

Death was instituted as a punishment. God forewarned that the result of disobedience would be that Adam would surely die.¹ The sentence was confirmed after the transgression: '*dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*'² All mankind have inherited the same nature and are therefore subject to sin, disease and death, as stated by the Apostle Paul:

'As by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'³

The word 'soul' is to be found in the Bible, but it is only used in the sense of a being or a creature. Man was made a living soul,⁴ but not an everliving soul, for '*the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*'⁵

The total lack of consciousness in the grave is explicitly stated:

'His (man's) breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.'⁶

Not only does his body perish, his *thoughts* perish, for '*the dead know not anything.*' David, a man after God's own heart, said that '*I go the way of all the earth.*'⁷ What was that way? The record says that David slept⁸ with his fathers and was buried.¹⁰ A thousand years later, he was still '*both dead and buried*' and, says the Apostle Peter, '*his sepulchre is with us unto this day . . . For David is not ascended into the heavens.*'¹¹ This same way the Prophet Daniel was to take, for he was told 'Go thou till the end be: for thou shalt rest.'¹²

RESURRECTION TAUGHT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

If the fact of man's mortality on account of sin were the whole truth, then the outlook would be most depressing. However, the verse just quoted relating to Daniel indicates that at '*the time of the end*'¹³ after his long '*rest*', he would '*stand in his lot at the end of the days.*'¹⁴ The truth of the resurrection is plainly set out in the same chapter concerning this time of the end:

'Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.'¹⁵

GOD'S PROMISED REWARD

Jesus was descended through David from a man called Abraham, the father of the Jewish race. Both Jesus personally and the Jews are described as Abraham's seed.

¹Genesis 2. 17 ²Genesis 3. 19 ³Romans 5. 12 ⁴Genesis 2. 7

⁵Ezekiel 18. 4. The Hebrew word 'Nephesh', translated soul, is also applied to living things generally. See e.g. Genesis 1. 21, 24, where it is translated creature. ⁶Psalms 146. 4

⁷Ecclesiastes 9. 5, 6, 10 ⁸1 Kings 2. 2 ⁹The Hebrew word 'shakab' primarily means to lie down

¹⁰1 Kings 2. 10 ¹¹Acts 2. 29, 34 ¹²Daniel 12. 13 ¹³Daniel 12. 9 ¹⁴Daniel 12. 13

¹⁵Daniel 12. 2 ¹⁶Galatians 3. 16; Romans 9. 6, 7

Abraham was specially chosen by God to receive certain promises which contain the whole substance of the reward for those who are to be resurrected and given everlasting life. Whereas Adam was disobedient, Abraham believed God and was obedient. God promised to give him the land which we now know as Israel (that is why it is called the Promised Land) and much surrounding country besides.¹⁷ Indeed, God's plan was that the whole earth would benefit:

'in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.'¹⁸

These promises have not yet come true. They had not come true in the days of the apostles. Stephen states that God gave Abraham '*NONE INHERITANCE*' in the land 'no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet he promised that he *would* give it to him for a *possession*, and to his seed after him.'¹⁹

Let's go further, taking a passage from the letter to the Hebrews:

'By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise . . .'²⁰

'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off.'²¹

Did you notice that? In plain language it says they *died* and did *not* receive their reward. Nevertheless they will receive it, for Jesus said so to certain Jews who did not believe in him,

'Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.'²²

God's promised reward is therefore to be enjoyed on the earth in the Kingdom of God. If you wish to be raised then you must believe in Jesus and obey God as did Abraham,

'if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'²³

JESUS

As we have said, Jesus was the especial '*seed*' promised to Abraham through whom the promises would be fulfilled. It was by his life of complete obedience and his voluntary sacrifice that he conquered sin. Because he was sinless God raised him from the dead to glorious immortality. Without resurrection Jesus would not have been saved, his '*soul*' would have been '*left in hell*' (i.e. the grave) and his '*flesh*' would have been '*corruption*'.²⁴ So we too would lie for ever in the grave unless we are similarly raised. Paul explains:

'For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.'²⁵

Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead to eternal life. All who are Christ's and

¹⁷Genesis 12. 1, 7; 13. 14-17; 15. 18 ¹⁸Genesis 12. 3; 22. 15-18; Romans 4. 13 ¹⁹Acts 7. 2-5
²⁰Hebrews 11. 8, 9 (R.V.) ²¹Hebrews 11. 13 ²²Luke 13. 28, 29 ²³Galatians 3. 29 ²⁴Acts 2. 31
²⁵1 Corinthians 15. 21, 22

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therefore Abraham's seed will likewise be the subjects of a bodily resurrection at the time of the end when he comes to establish the Kingdom of God. Paul continues:

'Every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming.'²⁶

BAPTISM

The next important step is to find out how we can become Christ's or '*in Christ*'. It is not sufficient merely to profess belief. When Jesus instructed his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel, he gave this important command:

'He that believeth AND IS BAPTIZED shall be saved.'²⁷

Our belief must be demonstrated by our obedience, and the first step is baptism. All mankind is '*in Adam*' by nature, but one can only become '*in Christ*' by baptism into his name. In writing to the Galatians, in the passage already quoted, Paul makes it very clear:

'Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been *baptized* into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, . . . ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed . . .'²⁸

Elsewhere Paul likens baptism²⁹ to burial and resurrection:

'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?'³⁰

Baptism is, therefore, a 'burial' with Jesus and a '*rising again*' to a new life, a life of obedience, in him. By this means one becomes associated with the hope of resurrection and eternal life made possible by his death.

'For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: . . . Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.'³¹

THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES

Unquestionably the resurrection of Jesus was the great impetus to the disciples to commence preaching him to the world. As Judas Iscariot had betrayed Jesus, the number was reduced to eleven, and Peter organised a replacement from among Jesus' other followers. Note the objective: '*One (must) be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection*'.³² The resurrection was the primary subject of their witness, as many passages show.³³ The very suggestion that there was no resurrection from the dead was forcibly met by Paul:

'If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.'³⁴

Brought before the Jews, Paul declared:

²⁶I Corinthians 15. 23 ²⁷Mark 16. 16 ²⁸Galatians 3. 26-29

²⁹N.B. Scriptural baptism is total immersion into water. ³⁰Romans 6. 3 ³¹Romans 6. 5

³²Acts 1. 22 ³³See e.g. Acts 2. 32; 3. 26; 4. 10; 5. 30; 10. 40; 13. 30; 17.3, 31

³⁴I Corinthians 15. 13, 17, 18

'Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question';³⁵

and again,

'There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust'.³⁶

At the end of his life he was warning Timothy of some

'Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already'.³⁷

THE TEACHING OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The simple faith taught by the disciples was soon corrupted by the incorporation of pagan thought into church teaching. This was the way the doctrine of the immortality of the soul came to pervert the Bible's message concerning death and the resurrection.

Greek philosophy based on Socrates and Plato taught the continuation of existence after death, and during the second century A.D. the number of learned men and philosophers among the Christians grew considerably. An ecclesiastical historian marks of the fatal effect of philosophy: substituting, in the place of the pure sublime simplicity of the gospel, an unseemly mixture of Platonism and Christianity.³⁸ Again, he states,

'It is also well known that of these philosophers, there were none whose sentiments and discipline were so well received by the ancient Christians as those of the Platonics and Pythagoreans'.³⁹

A glance at the early creeds in the doctrinal documents of the church will clearly show that they are simple statements of belief in God, Jesus (including his death and resurrection), the Holy Spirit and the resurrection of the body. We ask you: is the Bible teaching concerning death, and resurrection at the return of Jesus, compatible with the idea of an immortal soul? Is the church doctrine which attempts to reconcile these conflicting ideas by teaching of the uniting of the soul with the body at some determinate future time a plausible one? It is, of course, totally without scriptural foundation.

The Historian Gibbon also provides similar testimony.

'The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium' (i.e. Christ's reign on earth) 'was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ . . . Though it might not be universally received, it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers . . . But, when the edifice of the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth, was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism'.⁴⁰

³⁵Acts 23. 6 ³⁶Acts 24. 15 ³⁷II Timothy 2. 18

³⁸J. L. Mosheim, 'An Ecclesiastical History'. Century II, Part II Chapter 1. para XII

³⁹Ibid. Chapter III para. XIII ⁴⁰Gibbon, 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire', Chapter 15

JUDGMENT

Closely associated with resurrection is the procedure of judgment. Both good and bad are included in the resurrection, when either a reward, with a place in God's Kingdom, or punishment and rejection, will be dispensed. We have already quoted from Daniel that some will receive everlasting life and some everlasting contempt. Jesus said that he would

‘come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works’.⁴²

Also

‘All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation’.⁴³

Similarly, Paul warns that

‘we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad’.⁴⁴

WHO WILL BE RAISED?

There is, then, to be a resurrection and a judgment. But who will be raised? Everyone who has ever lived? Again we point to our reference from Daniel that *some* will awake. In the Psalms David refers to those who trust in wealth rather than in God. He says

‘None of them can by any means redeem his brother, . . . that he should still live forever’. ‘(For the redemption of their soul [i.e. themselves, their life] is precious, and it ceaseth forever)’.

He concludes that they shall *never* see light.

‘Man that is in honour, and *understandeth not*, is like the beasts that perish.’

Compare, however, David's confident hope that ‘*God will redeem my soul*’ (i.e. myself) *from the power of the grave*’.⁴⁵

The vast majority of mankind will therefore *not* be raised, because they have never heard or understood the truth concerning the one true God. They live their lives for good or ill, they receive the ‘*wages of sin*’, which is death,⁴⁶ and further judgment unnecessary. Paul confirms this in the words

‘For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law’.⁴⁷

The contrast between believers and non-believers is made clear when he writes ‘*concerning them which are asleep*’, that we

‘sorrow not, even as others which have NO HOPE. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep *in Jesus* will God bring with him’.⁴⁸

⁴¹Daniel 12. 2 ⁴²Matthew 16. 27 ⁴³John 5. 28, 29 ⁴⁴II Corinthians 5. 10; Romans 14. 10,

⁴⁵Psalms 49. 6-9, 15, 19, 20 ⁴⁶Romans 6. 23 ⁴⁷Romans 2. 12 ⁴⁸I Thessalonians 4. 13,

It is knowledge that makes one responsible to the judgment. Those who reject Jesus will be raised and condemned,⁴⁹ as will those who do not continue to walk worthily of their Lord and his great and precious promises.⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we urge you to become 'in Christ' and so make the resurrection your hope. Then you may take the assurance and comfort to be found in those words Paul penned at the close of his life,

'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only; but unto all them also that love his appearing.'⁵¹

BIBLE READING TABLES

JULY				AUGUST			
1	1 Samuel 13	Isaiah 56, 57	Rev. 21, 22	1	2 Samuel 18	Jeremiah 22	Rom. 9
2	..... 14	..... 58	Matt. 1, 2	2	..... 19	..... 23	..... 10, 11
3	..... 15	..... 59	..... 3, 4	3	..... 20, 21	..... 24	..... 12
4	..... 16	..... 60	..... 5	4	..... 22	..... 25	..... 13, 14
5	..... 17	..... 61	..... 6	5	..... 23	..... 26	..... 15, 16
6	..... 18	..... 62	..... 7	6	..... 24	..... 27	Mark 1
7	..... 19	..... 63	..... 8	7	1 Kings 1	..... 28	..... 2
8	..... 20	..... 64	..... 9	8	..... 2	..... 29	..... 3
9	..... 21, 22	..... 65	..... 10	9	..... 3	..... 30	..... 4
10	..... 23	..... 66	..... 11	10	..... 4, 5	..... 31	..... 5
11	..... 24	Jeremiah 1	..... 12	11	..... 6	..... 32	..... 6
12	..... 25	..... 2	..... 13	12	..... 7	..... 33	..... 7
13	..... 26, 27	..... 3	..... 14	13	..... 8	..... 34	..... 8
14	..... 28	..... 4	..... 15	14	..... 9	..... 35	..... 9
15	..... 29, 30	..... 5	..... 16	15	..... 10	..... 36	..... 10
16	..... 31	..... 6	..... 17	16	..... 11	..... 37	..... 11
17	2 Samuel 1	..... 7	..... 18	17	..... 12	..... 38	..... 12
18	..... 2	..... 8	..... 19	18	..... 13	..... 39	..... 13
19	..... 3	..... 9	..... 20	19	..... 14	..... 40	..... 14
20	..... 4, 5	..... 10	..... 21	20	..... 15	..... 41	..... 15
21	..... 6	..... 11	..... 22	21	..... 16	..... 42	..... 16
22	..... 7	..... 12	..... 23	22	..... 17	..... 43	1 Cor. 1, 2
23	..... 8, 9	..... 13	..... 24	23	..... 18	..... 44	..... 3
24	..... 10	..... 14	..... 25	24	..... 19	..... 45, 46	..... 4, 5
25	..... 11	..... 15	..... 26	25	..... 20	..... 47	..... 6
26	..... 12	..... 16	..... 27	26	..... 21	..... 48	..... 7
27	..... 13	..... 17	..... 28	27	..... 22	..... 49	..... 8, 9
28	..... 14	18 Rom. 1, 2	..... 29	28	2 Kings 1, 2	..... 50	..... 10
29	..... 15	..... 19	..... 3, 4	29	..... 3	..... 51	..... 11
30	..... 16	..... 20	..... 5, 6	30	..... 4	..... 52	..... 12, 13
31	..... 17	..... 21	..... 7, 8	31	..... 5	Lament. 1	..... 14

⁴⁹John 15. 22 ⁵⁰Luke 12. 47, 48 ⁵¹II Timothy 4. 7, 8

DOES IT MATTER WHAT WE BELIEVE?

Many people think they can be Christians without worrying too much about what they believe. Their view is that Christianity is expressed in living decent lives and being kind to others.

It is true that the Founder of Christianity told us this is how we should behave, but He also told us that the first and great commandment we should obey is to *'love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind'*. (Matthew 23. 37, 38.)

This commandment requires that we should read carefully the Word of God—the Holy Bible—so that we can understand just what God requires from each one of us. If we do this, we shall quickly realise that IT DOES MATTER WHAT WE BELIEVE.

CHRISTADELPHIANS BELIEVE THAT

The Bible is God's only true message for all men everywhere to read.

The one true God really cares about the world.

Soon God will take over world government and establish one worldwide kingdom on earth.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God and is the man appointed by God as king of the world.

Jesus will reign from Jerusalem over Jews and Arabs, and all nations.

Jesus lived, died and rose again to save us from sin and death and to give us hope of life forever.

Repentance, belief and baptism by immersion are essential for salvation.

God will solve all human problems completely and forever.

The Bible reveals the true purpose of life for today and tomorrow.

Soon Christ will return visibly to earth with great power.

Resurrection of the body at the return of Jesus is the only way to escape from the unconscious sleep of death.

Great News is for all who get ready for the coming of King Jesus.

The epistle of James

AN IMMENSELY PRACTICAL guide to the Christian life.' First impressions can be misleading, but this initial assessment of the letter is well supported by more detailed study. However, the reformer Martin Luther did not like it at all—'a right strawy epistle' was his biased opinion, because he considered (quite mistakenly) that James' words opposed the cardinal doctrine of '*justification by faith*', elsewhere expounded by the Apostle Paul, especially in his letter to the believers in Rome. But Paul also wrote of '*faith WORKING through love*',¹ and this is very much the recurring theme of the epistle we are now going to consider. Not only here but throughout Scripture runs the principle that God will judge every man '*according to his works*'.²

WHICH JAMES WAS HE?

The name 'James' is the English equivalent of 'Jacob' and was evidently a popular name amongst the Jews in the first century—no less than four people named James appear in the New Testament. Two were apostles of Jesus: James son of Zebedee and brother of John;³ and James the son of Alphaeus.⁴ Then there was the father of another apostle—we read of Judas (not Iscariot), '*son of James*'.⁵ Finally we have a James who belonged to Jesus' own family, together with his other brothers—Joseph, Simon and Judas,⁶ none of whom believed in Jesus' Messiahship until after his resurrection, when they were soon converted to the faith in Christ.⁷ In time this James, '*the Lord's brother*'⁸ became the leader of the apostolic eldership in Jerusalem.⁹ Scholars are virtually unanimous in supposing this last-named James to be the author of the letter before us. They point to parallels in wording which it shows with James' address at the council in Jerusalem and with the circular letter sent out as a result of the apostles' deliberations (the letter is assumed to have been drafted by this same James).¹⁰ Also the title of the Epistle of Jude (i.e. Judas), who describes himself as '*a servant of Jesus Christ and BROTHER OF JAMES*'¹¹ does suggest that two of Christ's brothers were engaged in the writing of the New Testament letters. However, as we shall note in the next paragraph, there are many subtle allusions in this letter to words *spoken* by Jesus during his three-year ministry. These were probably not heard by Jesus' brothers during

their period of scepticism, but would certainly have registered with the twelve disciples and especially with the 'inner three', Peter, James and John. Further, the references to this letter to the synagogue as the regular meeting place,¹² and to the persecution of Christians by rich rulers,¹³ argue a very early date for the penning of this epistle; so does the absence of any allusion to problems which the infant church was to face a little later (e.g. the inclusion of Gentiles in the Gospel call and whether they ought to keep the Law of Moses). If '*the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad*'¹⁴ refers to the persecution of the Jewish believers which arose after Stephen's martyrdom,¹⁵ this would be a further link with the earliest days of Christianity.

A MIRROR TO CHRIST'S TEACHING

In the long run the author's identity remains an open question. Not that it is of vital importance anyway, for whoever he was he was moved to write, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wise counsels necessary to guide the daily lives of the very first believers. This 'commentary' on Christ's teaching was very necessary; Jesus' words have often been misunderstood and misapplied; figurative language has been taken literally (and vice versa). In the New Testament the apostolic letters play an essential role in supplying an authoritative application of the Master's words to the lives and circumstances of Christians throughout the centuries. In every case, where there is a doubt about what Jesus intended when he commanded us to follow him, the epistles supply inspired guidance on how to interpret his words and how to live the Christian life.

The following table illustrates how closely James' words reflect Christ's teaching, especially from that basic discourse in Matthew's Gospel commonly called 'The Sermon on the Mount'.

JAMES	JESUS
'Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only . . . ' (1. 22)	'Therefore whosoever heareth these words of mine, and doeth them . . . ' (7. 24 RV)
'He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy' (2. 13)	'Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy'. (5. 7)
'Can a fig tree . . . yield olives, or a vine figs?' (3. 12 R.V.)	'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' (7. 16)
'The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace.' (3. 18 R.V.)	'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.' (5. 9)
'Who art thou that judgest another?' (4. 12)	'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' (7. 1)
'Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.' (5. 2)	'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt.' (6. 19)
'Swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation' (5. 12)	'Swear not at all; neither by heaven . . . nor by the earth . . . But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.' (5. 34-37)

It will be readily seen that, without making exact quotations, James echoes Christ's words, just as one might expect from someone who had been an intimate companion of the Lord. And just as Jesus himself often quoted or alluded to the Old Testament, so our author frequently reproduces the thoughts and sometimes the wording of that divine source of wisdom and knowledge, notably but by no means exclusively from the Book of Proverbs. For example: '*Be . . . slow to speak*' underlines several Old Testament passages, such as:

'In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.'¹⁶

slow to wrath' reflects

'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty . . .'¹⁷

the exhortation:

'Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall exalt you;

its roots in

'a man's pride shall bring him low: but he that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honour.'¹⁸

James like the Master's own dictum, fully exemplified in his life:

'Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.'¹⁹

OTHER THEMES

Several matters are developed or repeatedly touched on by James in the course of his letter. The need for true humility and for firm control of the tongue are just two examples.²⁰ Equally stressed is the necessity to care for the poor, especially widows and orphans.²¹ Giving practical help to these is one way of proving that a believer's faith is alive and active. Faith must and will show itself in the whole tenor of daily living, and particularly at important crossroads in our lives. James cites two particular cases: that of Abraham, who at God's command was ready even to sacrifice his much-loved son Isaac²² (confident that God would raise him again from the dead!²³); also the faith of Rahab of Jericho who hid Joshua's spies and thereby saved alive her whole family.²⁴

The value of prayer is another of James' favourite themes (compare Jesus' own words to his disciples . . . '*should always pray and not give up*'²⁵). God will give wisdom to those who lack it IF they ask Him in *faith* and do not doubt.²⁶ (Who says that James neglects the need for faith?!). Anyone in trouble should '*cast their burden on the Lord*'.²⁷ The elders of each community—and indeed all the believers—are encouraged to pray for one another and for the healing of the sick among them; even their sins would be forgiven²⁸ (no hint here of a separate priesthood to hear confessions and pronounce absolution!) Elijah's effective prayers are a standing example of the '*power of prayer*' of a righteous man.²⁹ But James includes a warning about prayers offered on a wrong

basis; such requests will definitely *not* be granted.³⁰ Comfort for the poor (but rich in faith) and condemnation of rich and powerful oppressors figure prominently in the letter;¹³ so does the practice of mercy and of impartiality, two important features of God's character.³¹

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE TRUTH

A fascinating aspect of this letter is the firm support it affords to the foundational teachings of Bible doctrine, now so largely discounted by church teaching if not directly opposed. Amongst other first principles referred to (often in passing as being wellknown and fully accepted), the Apostle endorses the unity of God and His unchanging character—compassionate, merciful and Giver of all good.³² Man is mortal; without the spirit (of life) the body is dead, and *souls* need to be saved from death!³³ This life is a time of probation, in which faith, good works and separation from the world and its defilement are essential if the reward is to be gained.³⁴ Believers wait patiently for Christ's second coming,³⁵ when he will sit as judge and award '*the crown of life*' to those who have loved him;³⁶ such people are '*heirs of the kingdom*' so they will then receive the inheritance of the earth, just as he has promised.³⁷ To enter the '*way of life*' one must be '*born again*' by '*the Word of Truth*', according to God's will;³⁸ the willing submission of each believer to that '*implanted Word*'³⁹ will enable him to overcome his natural alienation from the things of God. If the Word of God is refused, the temptation will overcome him, for

'each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire he is dragged away and enticed.

Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fullgrown, gives birth to death'.⁴⁰

Here in essence is the Biblical doctrine of the devil—*not* an outside person or influence as in the Satan of church teaching, but that inward, inherited 'bent' to rebel against God's laws. The Apostle Paul felt the same strong inclination within himself; he called it '*the law of sin*' at work in his members, which waged war against his recognition of God's law and his desire to obey it.⁴¹ Paul looked forward to deliverance from the '*body of death*' by God's salvation in Christ. So James too recognises that the implanted Word—the '*mind of Christ*' allowed to rule our hearts—is able to save from death.³⁹

'TEMPTING' AND 'TESTING'

Perhaps we could enlarge on this last point a little. Chapter one of this letter illustrates the double meaning of the Greek word variously translated 'tempt', 'try', 'prove' or 'assay', and James pursues this subject by drawing an extended parallel to the theme of conception, birth and growth to maturity. The more familiar meaning 'temptation' is illustrated in Paul's warning to Timothy, that those who love money fall '*into temptation* and a snare which will eventually destroy them'.⁴² The other meaning appears when we read that God *tempted* Abraham,⁴³ i.e. tested his willingness to obey; this is quite different from tempting someone to do evil (which God never does).⁴⁴

the parallel theme which James develops makes use of both aspects, and also weaves other Old Testament strands, notably the temptation and fall of our first parents in Eden, also the theme in the early chapters of Proverbs where Wisdom, a chaste woman, and Folly, a harlot, compete for the attention of the simple and inexperienced mind. Folly (i.e. the wisdom of this world which is foolishness to God⁴⁵) lies in wait for the simpleton in order to entice him into her house—but '*her quests are in THE DEPTHS OF THE GRAVE*'.⁴⁶ Wisdom (i.e. the true wisdom which is from above⁴⁷) is, by contrast, '*A TREE OF LIFE to them that lay hold upon her*'.⁴⁸

James is telling us that the allegiance of each man's mind is being contested. Within him, by inheritance from Adam, are his own evil desires, which like a harlot are repeatedly soliciting him to turn aside from the path of virtue. If he succumbs to such inducements, the fruit of this illicit union is *sin*; and sin, if unchecked, will '*give birth to DEATH*'. If however, by listening instead to divine Wisdom, a man resists these temptations' (which we may now understand as tests of his integrity), he may look forward confidently to God's approval.

AN EARLY EXAMPLE

Events contemporary with the Apostle exemplify these two possible courses. The old history of Ananias and his wife Sapphira is very much to the point here. They had lied to God about the purchase price of some property they had sold, having '*agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord*'.⁴⁹ '*Why has thou CONCEIVED this thing IN THINE HEART?*' was Peter's searching question⁵⁰ upon hearing which Ananias collapsed and *died* (a fate which quickly overtook Sapphira too). Such is the outcome for all who practise 'earthly wisdom', which is condemned by James as '*sensual*' and '*evilish*'.⁵¹

By contrast we have only to consider the Word of God implanted in the heart of James and his fellow disciples (Judas excepted!). Jesus had told them:

'If ye continue *in my word*, then are ye my disciples indeed . . .'⁵²
and in his prayer for them he said:

'I have given them *Thy word* . . . *Thy word is truth*'.⁵³

Here is the heavenly Wisdom, which is not native in men but needs to be *planted*. When *trials* come upon a *faithful* disciple they develop patience, i.e. perseverance in good works. But James adds:

'Perseverance must *finish* its work so that you may be *mature* and *complete*'.⁵⁴

The divine aim then for each one of us is *full growth*, *maturity* in godliness; the reward, bestowal of '*the crown of LIFE*'. The Apostle Paul draws a like analogy in Romans Chapter 6, and sums it up neatly:

'The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord'.⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

James concludes on as practical a note as that with which he began. He commends as worthy of all effort the recovery of anyone who has strayed from the faith in Christ. Jesus had warned of the inevitability of some stumbling and falling;⁵⁷ trying hard to bring back these weak ones into '*the living way*' is evidence of true love and compassion, most appropriate for those who profess allegiance to '*the Good Shepherd*'—had he not come to seek and save those who had been lost?⁵⁸ If the sinner repents and returns, all his sins will be forgiven. Thus the letter ends, reaffirming the love of God towards even the wayward—as Jesus had earlier so splendidly taught in the parable of '*the Prodigal Son*'.⁵⁹ No 'straws' in James' writings; instead, interweaving of threads of pure gold!

J. H. Broughton
Pontesbury

NOTES AND REFERENCES

(References to James' Epistle unless otherwise stated)

- ¹Galatians 5. 6 (R.V.) ²Matthew 16. 27; Romans 2. 6; I Peter 1. 17; Revelation 22. 12
³Matthew 10. 2 ⁴Matthew 10. 3 ⁵Acts 1. 13 (R.V.) ⁶Matthew 13. 55 (R.V.) ⁷Acts 1.
⁸Galatians 1. 19 ⁹Acts 12. 17; 21. 18 ¹⁰Acts 15. 22-29 ¹¹Jude 1. 1 (R.V.) ¹²2. 2 (R.
¹³2. 6, 7; 5. 1-6 ¹⁴1. 1 ¹⁵Acts 8. 1; 11, 19 ¹⁶1. 19; Proverbs 10. 19 ¹⁷1. 19; Proverbs 16.
¹⁸4. 10; Proverbs 29. 23 (R.V.) ¹⁹Matthew 23. 12 ²⁰1. 9; 4. 6; 3. 1-11 ²¹1. 27; 2. 14
²²2. 21-23 ²³Hebrews 11. 17-19 ²⁴2. 25; Hebrews 11. 31 ²⁵Luke 18. 1 (N.I.V.) ²⁶
²⁷Psalms 55. 22 ²⁸5. 13-16 ²⁹5. 17, 18 ³⁰4. 1-4 ³¹5. 11; 2. 1, 9 ³²1. 5, 17
³³2. 26; 5. 20 ³⁴1. 27; 4. 4, 8 ³⁵5. 7-9 ³⁶1. 12; Revelation 2. 10 ³⁷2. 5; Matthew 5.
³⁸1. 18; John 1. 13 ³⁹1. 21 (R.V.) ⁴⁰1. 14, 15 (N.I.V.) ⁴¹Romans 7. 18-25 ⁴²I Timothy
⁴³Genesis 22. 1 (R.V. 'prove') ⁴⁴1. 13 ⁴⁵I Corinthians 3. 19 ⁴⁶Proverbs 9. 18 (N.I.
⁴⁷3. 17 ⁴⁸Proverbs 3. 18 ⁴⁹Acts 5. 9 ⁵⁰Acts 5. 4 ⁵¹3. 15 ⁵²John 8. 31; cp. 15. 7
⁵³John 17. 14, 17 ⁵⁴1. 4 (N.I.V.) ⁵⁵Romans 6. 23 ⁵⁶5. 19, 20 ⁵⁷Matthew 18. 7
⁵⁸Luke 19. 10 ⁵⁹Luke 15. 11-32

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor receives a regular post-bag from interested readers of LIGHT. Most of these letters require a private reply, and where confidentiality is asked for, this is always respected. As many of the matters raised in correspondence to the Editor are of general interest, we are always pleased to publish appropriate questions and answers when space permits.

C. Taylor of Berkhamsted, England, writes—

'I have recently become a reader of your Light Magazine, but would be pleased if you would answer the following in the pages of the magazine:

The Bible gives two accounts in Genesis of creation. The first (chapter 1. 1 to chapter 2. 3) describes how God went about creating everything; the second (chapter 2. 4-25) describes the act of creation and how God's intended relationship with mankind came into it. These two accounts were written by two people as the spellings of the word God, in the original languages, are different.

The writers were explaining the same thing, but not from the same viewpoint. This could be because each had his own ideas of creation. These ideas of the individual could distort the truth to the point that the Bible is not so much inspired or God-given, but rather a collection of personal ideas.

How is one able to tell whether or not this is the case?'

Editor replies:

You say that the first two chapters of Genesis were written by different authors as the spelling in chapter 1 for the name of God is different from that of Chapter 2. 4 words. However, it is not the spelling that is different; it is that in chapter 2 another name of God is added. In chapter 1 the word 'God' is translated from the Hebrew word 'Elohim', a word which means 'mighty ones' and is frequently used in relation to the angels. In chapter 2 'LORD God' is translated from 'Yahweh Elohim'.

God did not reveal His Name, Yahweh, to man until the time of Moses.¹ God specifically told Moses that although He had appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they had not known Him by this new name, but by the name 'Ail (or El) Shaddai'—the Almighty. God said, 'But by my name Jehovah (Yahweh) was I not known to you.'²

Bearing this in mind it can be assumed that the book of Genesis from chapter 2. 4 onwards was written (probably by Moses) after this Name of God had been revealed.

But what about the preceding 34 verses? These could also have been written Moses under inspiration at an earlier date, or they could have been handed down a recognized inspired account and incorporated in the records collated by Moses. Either way, it doesn't really matter because whoever wrote the creation accounts, there can be no doubt that their information came from the same source—God. When one reads the ancient creation legends of other nations of the world, they are so obviously the fanciful myths and imaginations of man. But these records in Genesis stand poles apart from these other fantastic stories. There is no discord or contradiction at all between chapters 1 and 2. The first sets out the *order* of creation events from 'the beginning'. The second does not purport to set out events in order but gives more details on certain aspects of creation and what happened afterwards. Important points are—

- 1) that BOTH accounts attribute the creation to God (*Yahweh*) through His ministering angels or '*Elohim*'. (There is a great depth of meaning in all the names and titles of God which would require much more space to explain fully);
- 2) that the two accounts are in complete harmony with each other and each complements the other;
- 3) that the two accounts are referred to through Scripture and are supported by the teaching of Christ and his Apostles. The following are just two examples, one from the Old and one from the New Testament, and there are others.²

*'Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.'*³

*'And he (Jesus) answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,'*⁴

²Job 38. 4-11 Psalm 104. 4-9, 28-30 Acts 17. 24-29 Romans 5. 12-21
I Corinthians 15. 21, 22 ³Psalm 104. 30 ⁴Matthew 19. 4

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